

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1 1. A telephone system comprising:
2 a switching system for receiving a call from a calling party;
3 a voice mail box coupled to the switching system for receiving the call if a
4 called party does not answer the call; and
5 a telephone for receiving the call from the calling party, the telephone being
6 capable of screening the calling party when the calling party is coupled to the voice mailbox.

1 2. The system of claim 1 wherein the telephone further includes first and second
2 connections to the switching system, wherein in one of the first and second connections is
3 utilized to provide a three-way call between the calling party, the called party and the voice
4 mailbox.

1 3. The system of claim 2 wherein the three-way called party can not hear the
2 calling party during the three-way call.

1 4. The system of claim 3 wherein the calling party can through interaction with
2 the telephone talk with the calling party through the other of the first and second connections
3 and the voice mail box is dropped from the call.

1 5. A method for voice mail screening comprising the steps of:

- 2 (a) receiving a call from a calling party by a voice mail box; and
- 3 (b) joining the called party, calling party and voice mailbox in a three-way
- 4 call via a connection from a telephone of the called party such that the calling party can screen
- 5 the calling party's message.

1 6. The method of claim 5 which includes the step of (c) preventing the calling

2 party from hearing the called party, calling party and voice mailbox.

1 7. The method of claim 6 which includes the step of dropping the voice mail box

2 from the three-way call by the telephone when the calling party speaks to the called party.

1 8. A computer readable medium containing program instructions for voice mail

2 screening, the program instructions for:

- 3 (a) receiving a call from a calling party by a voice mail box; and
- 4 (b) joining the called party, calling party and voice mailbox in a three-way
- 5 call via a connection from a telephone of the called party such that the calling party can screen
- 6 the calling party's message.

1 9. The computer readable medium of claim 8 which includes the step of (c)

2 preventing the calling party from hearing the called party, calling party and voice mail box.

1 10. The computer readable medium of claim 9 which includes the step of dropping

2 the voice mail box from the three-way call by the telephone when the calling party speaks to
3 the called party.

1 11. A telephone comprising:
2 a receiver for receiving a call from the calling party; and
3 a voice mail screening system within the telephone for allowing a called party
4 of hearing the calling party when the calling party is coupled to a voice mailbox.

1 12. The telephone of claim 11 wherein the telephone further includes first and
2 second connections to the switching system, wherein in one of the first and second connections
3 is utilized to provide a three-way call between the calling party, the called party and the voice
4 mailbox.

1 13. The telephone of claim 12 wherein the three-way called party can not hear the
2 calling party during the three-way call.

1 14. The telephone of claim 13 wherein the calling party can through interaction
2 with the telephone talk with the calling party through the other of the first and second
3 connections and the voice mail box is dropped from the call.